ENGLISH EPISODES

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The Vicar of Pimlico—Justice Wilkinshaw's Attentions—The Fitting Obsequies—Katherine in the Temple—The New 'Marienbad-Elegy'

BY

FREDERICK WEDMORE

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The first of these imaginative pieces has been passed through the 'Illustrated London News' and the last through the 'New Review,' while upon those that lie between there rests the responsibility of having given dulness to Mr. Clement Shorter's 'Sketch.'

F. W.

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THE *dramatis personæ*—not counting one or two 'supers'—are an extremely young woman with rich brown hair and a mouth of telling curves, and a beneficed clergyman who makes no claim not to be considered elderly, for he is fifty-five, and to look at him, you would say at once he was in the last stage of his vigour. That stage may, of course, be a long one, but he is certainly in it, with frame that is tallish and still lithe of action, with clean-shaven face showing lines of thought and of work, and with yet abundant hair, iron-grey, tumbling about his ears, picturesquely long towards his shoulders. All that, and the frequent reverie, and the occasional sadness, and then the responsive smile of the kind people speak of as 'winning'—when he is neither absorbed in thought nor in work, when he and his mind come to meet you

—all that, and the eye that lifts and lightens, make up an attractive personality, of which, perhaps, the wisest have most of all felt the charm. There is something in these things, and in his pose, submissive and courteous, which recalls at first sight Mr. Irving in 'The Vicar of Wakefield,' but the Vicar of Pimlico, with his more massive head, has flashes of energy, revelations of strength, such as there is never a trace of in Mr. Irving's Eighteenth-century parson. And again, though the face of the Vicar of Pimlico—whose spirit shines through him—is, indeed, at bottom trustful, it is yet of the full Nineteenth Century, alert and aware, for all its goodness. For years upon years Arthur Bradbury-Wells has had to hold his own, in the interests of Church and of people.

Yes; in the parish of All Souls, Pimlico, it has been a fight, undoubtedly. First, just over against the great and almost unadorned but finely proportioned church of his building (for he was rich, and has given his goods without stint), a dissenting sect, in favour with well-to-do tradesmen, put up a showy chapel, which consisted chiefly of freestone carving, of ornaments out of place, and of a vestry for 'Happy Evenings,' in competition with music-halls.

The Reverend A. Bradbury-Wells was, one fears, too human to view that erection cordially. Next, there was the stir in the parish made now and again by Agnostics with a mission. To the Rev. A. Bradbury-Wells they, when they came, indicated rather the folly of the Present than that which they thought to make evident—the folly of most of the Past. *Les vrais hommes de progrès*—he was wont to consider, in the words of a genius who was but tenderly sceptical—*les vrais hommes de progrès sont ceux qui ont pour point de départ le respect profond du passé.* Then a Board School was threatened in the immediate neighbourhood, and, instead of learning to read and to write, to cook and to sew, and to be reverent and womanly, and with pretty manners, there was reason to fear that the girls of the district would all play badly on the piano, and would learn to draw indifferently, and would never be poor men's wives. But that alarm was premature—people, at all events, married. Last of all, in the high road, came, every Sunday, hysterical, ill-fed women, vulgarising Christianity—as it seemed to the Vicar—with all the authority that in the natural course of things belongs to a tambourine and a flag.

These were the mere outward circumstances

which had weighed a little on the Reverend A. Bradbury-Wells; but, behind and beyond them, were there no daily questionings, no inner conflicts? Serenely as he held himself in the main, and with a measure of dutiful buoyancy, this man, plunged in the stirring sea of modern London, could correspond but in part to the priest of Goldsmith's fancy, of Irving's refined dream.

So much for the Vicar. He passes into the background while one stares hard, for a couple of minutes, at the well-grown, slender young thing, so full, at all events, of race and of breeding —Millicent Sergison—distinguished, piquante, warm-eyed, delicate-handed, flexible-mouthed, with chestnut hair—touched, as it were, with sun or flame—rebellious on a shapely head. Her age, about twenty. Had she suffered the misfortune of being arrayed by Pre-Raphaelites, they might have dressed her in purple—Heaven knows what their pranks would have led them to—but she chose her own frocks, and limited their hues, with needless closeness, to a pure white, black (with no reflections, no 'surface,') and then a soft and low-toned brown, in which, with her own colouring, finely warm, Miss Sergison, from head to foot, gleamed cordial, like an October woodland.

Perhaps it was when she was in white that Miss Sergison looked to the stranger most of all unapproachable—virginal, young, but desperately superior. It was not her eyes that did it: they were fearless, but gentle. It was not her slim figure. It was not her nose, which, pure in outline, was not at all commanding—so refined, undoubtedly, that it, by itself, would have kept her her girlish dignity; but just enough 'tip-tilted' too (thank Goodness!) to prevent her from being austere. No: it was not the nose; it was that remarkable mouth—the curve of the short upper lip. That gave her her haughtiness —assured you of the depth, almost the fastidiousness, of her refinement.

Youth will dare anything, for it ignores repulse. Young Oxford in a white waistcoat, after dinner, or taken unawares in the morning, would no more blanch before Beauty the most exalted than before Russian guns. The young man patronises girlhood: it is middle-age that considers, that doubts—perhaps even a little pathetically—its power of interesting: it has, perhaps, learnt humbleness.

But whoever it was, young or old, who approached Miss Sergison—whoever it was that braved that short upper lip—there was no rebuff

for him, he found ; and if he understood her sex at all, or appreciated it, he was generally happy. From that moment forth, as long as he was with her, he had a good time. She spoke so sincerely —she gave her real attention—she heard you so graciously that, unawares, a value slipped into the things you were saying. The attitude of her mind was sensible and friendly ; so, if you were not foolish yourself, you felt you had gained an acquaintance worth having. Something human, direct and simple, thoroughly intelligent, was opening to you—a new bit of humanity, very real and nice, quite worth the exploring.

The Reverend Arthur Bradbury-Wells had passed within the range of that clear eye of Miss Sergison's. He had braved that short upper lip, and more had come of it than to most men. The impression she made on him, with the slim lines of her figure, her niceness, her radiant warm-coloured youth—with herself, in fine—no work, no diversion, no distance, no newer voices, no latest years, would efface.

So those are the *dramatis personæ*.

But no one pretends for a moment they have any right to be together, though there is, of course, just this to be said for the young woman, if she showed an unusual taste: that here and there

a clear-sighted girl, a thoughtful thing, reflective for all her prettiness—nay, reflective because of her prettiness (since most wide human experiences are denied to the plain)—such a girl does take note of the different moods in which she is approached, of the point of view from which she is looked at, and then, perhaps—but it is all according to what she really wants—she, in her humble place, in valley or lowland, does not quite heartily relish the gaze directed upon her by Youth from its heights.

Arthur Bradbury-Wells, you see, was hardly the average middle-aged man—hardly the average parish clergyman, with party leanings, High, Broad, or Low. He was always a little detached; a very little different. Like an Archbishop of York, he began by being a soldier. Discipline, trained obedience, a respect for the Powers of the Earth, a recognition of ranks, had long been a part of him, and having learned to obey he had learnt also to organise and command. He had worked, for many years now, his large London parish, at one end of which—up towards Buckingham Gate—were some town houses of great families, whilst at the other, towards Ebury Bridge, there lived shabby lodging-house keepers and foreign clerks, small heroines of burlesque,

midnight press-men on the sporting newspapers, ballet-girls, and the *déclassées*. He was a vigourous, straightforward preacher, who yet, from his tastes, could not keep fiction and poetry out of his sermons. In Art he liked grace in the symbolic and dignity in the religious: on his walls were Puvis de Chavannes and Hippolyte Flandrin. He was a student of music: so devoted a lover of it that once, as a bait to a first-rate organist to come to his church, he had offered to give up his house to him—vicarage proper he never had any: the money that was to have bought it had gone to his schools, and he made himself comfortable in a stuccoed terrace close to his church, and in a neighbourhood of exceedingly doubtful people. There, just inside the door, his surplice, faultlessly white, hung on the hat-stand. He was not an ordinary man. Still, the world is the world; human nature but human nature. An intelligent third person would have some difficulty in believing that any impression which the Vicar might make on Millicent Sergison could be half as profound or as lasting as that she produced upon him.

Miss Sergison was not one of his parishioners. Parishioners bored him with their attentions,

and now and then he fled from them. He had met her by chance at dinner, on the north side of the Park. She had come that night to fill a vacancy at the eleventh hour. He saw her across the table, over the yellow-shaded candles, the pine, the bananas, the *marrons glacés*, the tulip-bed on the table-cloth; and then, some twenty minutes after her skirts had followed into the drawing-room the skirts of an actress *en vogue*, Bradbury-Wells—observing that there was no youth but one he could be taking the place of—got introduced to her and talked to her until he saw that Mr. Pater was standing with bowed head and folded hands in exquisite politeness—it became their duty, as courteous guests, to listen while gifted Youth, rich in memories of Albert Chevalier, warbled 'It's the nasty way 'e *sez* it,' and ''E's only jest so 'igh.'

There is one sentimental passage in the work of an admirable poetess, which tells how a man —a would-be lover—if he would understand a woman and keep his hold on her, must take her into regions 'pure from Courtship's flatteries'—take her to fields and to woods. But if instinct and experience give the clue, a drawing-room in Bryanston Square may just as well be the scene

of a man's first soundings. Bradbury-Wells was always absolutely natural; so too was Miss Sergison. These highly civilised yet very simple beings formed a decided opinion of each other in the forty minutes that passed between the arrival of the men above stairs and that departure of some busy person who was naturally 'going on,' which—the hour being what it was—became the signal for the rest to disperse themselves.

Though Millicent Sergison was not in the least 'independent,' and not particularly learned—though she dreamt of no social revolt, and had always omitted to yearn that her sex should achieve the crowning triumph of transforming itself into second-rate, impotent Man—Bradbury-Wells discovered that she had one touch of very modern feeling in her: she was not content to sit in her father's drawing-room till someone else should invite her to sit in his instead. Sooner, perhaps, than a girl would have done a generation ago, she (who was the third of four sisters) had chafed a little in a purposeless home. The social qualities that she had, nobody seemed to need the aid of. Actual 'accomplishments,' she had few. She had no gifts but her womanliness. So she aimed low for herself—was she making,

perhaps, a mistake?—in trying to be accepted as a 'probationer' at an hospital.

The Vicar of Pimlico had very definite notions as to the unsuitableness of nurses's work for girls bred gently. The well-born had, no doubt, courage—courage and self-control were as much their virtues as chastity was the virtue of the middle-classes and helpfulness the virtue of the poor. But, in ordinary hospitals, apart from the monotony, drudgery, strain of the work, there was the hardening contact with the ugly and loathsome; there was a familiar intercourse with men over repellent affairs. 'Some women must do these things,' said Mr. Bradbury-Wells—though he was in evening dress Miss Sergison knew, of course, that she was talking to a clergyman: nay, knew more about him than that—'some ladies; one respects them; but the fewer the better. A young girl should never be a nurse to strangers, among strangers, except in two cases.'

'What are they?' asked Millicent.

'In war, when a man risks his life, a girl may risk her refinement. I could excuse anything then. We shall have a war some day, and that will be the time for your audacities. In some respects I sha'n't be sorry for it. People will

forget their differences. When our folk understand that the land is in danger, all England, one may hope, will hurl itself on the enemy. The Natural Man speaks,' he added apologetically, smiling. 'When I had a sword, my *words* would have been less militant. But in any war I assume our cause would be a good one. I believe it would. The English race, as much as Rome itself, was made to colonise and control. Jingo again, am I not? and a little out of the fashion. I can't help it! Well, you might be a nurse, Miss Sergison, in any camp hospital—I'd forgive you for that—or, to-day, if you will, in a hospital for children.' He stopped a moment; added in explanation: 'There, girls, whose tenderness, you may have discovered, is not really so marked as it's supposed to be—would *learn* tenderness. I mean, the circumstances would bring it out.'

'I'm glad I sha'n't have to remember that I'm doing anything you disapprove of so much. It's a children's hospital I'm going to—one that's at Shadwell—the "East London." I'd *rather* go there. A probationer's not a medical student. That what people call the "biggest men" don't attend, can't make any difference to *me*.'

A look of approval rested on the face of the

elderly-middle-aged clergyman; and his frankness, his pleasure in her, the whole of his character, urged him to utter his real thought: 'I'm simply delighted! It will be nice for the children. They are at home with youth; they're curiously sensitive about prettiness. Fancy you taking your line and your colour—your hair, and face, and all your pleasant ways—down into Shadwell! I'm delighted! Are there many pretty girls there?'

'Mr. Bradbury-Wells,' she answered with enthusiasm, 'those that I've seen are *charming*!'

In the back drawing-room the hostess was mentioning to one or two people that the Vicar of Pimlico, though nothing of a courtier, was somehow a *persona grata:* the influential—when they are wise and clever—being no doubt wont to approve of the independent. 'Perhaps,' said she, 'he is almost next on the list for a Deanery.' That embrowned lily, Millicent Sergison—with her warm-coloured hair crowning her flowing white—took further stock of him quietly. She had seen people who were comedies, people who were books, and people who, like Hamlet's Osric, were mere water-flies. The Vicar was a man and a fighter: individual as well as dignified; bold as well as benignant. Yes, she had made

up her mind about him, absolutely. In more than ordinary ways those two had reached each other; and with a celerity which—it is conventionally considered—does not belong to our day.

II

If poets are born, not made, so, certainly, are lovers. The Vicar, whatever were his years, was born to be the lover of Millicent Sergison; and Millicent Sergison came into the world to give her heart to the Vicar. When she was still within his sight—during those short hours of the dinner-party—he had liked, admired, warmed to her. The moment she was out of it—when, indeed, the Vicar, frugally minded to walk home across the Park, was changing, in the little cloak-room, his evening dress-shoes for the serviceable boots that tramped over London—he knew that 'liking,' 'admiration,' 'cordiality,' were words which, taken altogether, expressed but a part of his feeling. In the waste of the windy Park, the thought of her haunted him. In the streets, southwards, it haunted him. It was with him when the lifting of the latch-key had given entrance to his house, and there confronted him his bed-room candlestick, his letters by the

nine o'clock post, his faultless surplice—assumed so often and so hurriedly—hanging up in the hall.

Early as was his wont, he was in his school-house next morning—having an eye on the teachers and, in each separate class-room, saying to the scholars, 'Good-morning, children!' to which, like a chorus in some mild comic opera, mechanical yet well-mannered, automatic yet nicely disposed, came the response unanimous and regular, in childish treble, 'Good-morning, Sir!' Then the thought of her haunted him—haunted him 'like a passion'—Wordsworth's phrase. Nay, turn the phrase differently—haunted him like the passion she was.

But he had his own work: he would never see her more, perhaps, unless he made his opportunity. Well then, it was his business to make an opportunity. But his work again—his own difficult work. And a generation divided them!

III

One day—and it was in the dress of a probationer; a probationer who, like a maid-servant, has a 'Sunday out'—the Vicar saw Miss Sergison in church. It was towards the end of the sermon. The Vicar avoided, for the most part, looking

at his congregation while he preached. So far as the mere physical direction of his appeals was concerned, they were addressed to the western wall—to a given yard or so of sober brick-work, just below Mr. William Morris's rose-red window. But now and again, in spite of his practice, a face in the congregation asserted itself; and the Vicar discerned Miss Sergison—all quietude and reverence—at the end, very fortunately, of some sentences of singular directness, inspired by a recent ecclesiastical squabble. His heart was in his words.

'I hope,' he had said, 'I am not anti-Christian —I fear, sometimes, I am almost anti-clerical. My friends, I honestly doubt whether the celebration of Evening Communion, here this night, if we chose to have it, would seem to God, in His high heaven, a heinous offence; and, on the other hand, if, next Sunday, I assumed before you all the 'Eastward position,' I will not conceal from you that I should not look forward to the stars changing their courses as a result of that incident. In our Master's record—so far as I can read it—these things seem to be ignored. Did He come into the world to settle these things—to be disturbed at all about them?' The voice rang out. 'My friends, He came saying not any

word but *this* word, "Little children, love one another!"'

The sermon ended, as some fashionable people noticed—who were on the *qui vive* for an effect—just a little tamely. The thread of the discourse seemed gone. A touch of anti-climax. But nothing—as the tolerant amongst them pleasantly allowed—nothing can be perfect, and this, if not precisely thrilling, was at least good.

Ten minutes later—after the hymn and Benediction—the Vicar, following his usual ways, came down into the body of the church—in his frock-coat now—and sat at the western end, under the Morris window, where one heard best of all the organist in his prolonged voluntary—it was exquisite this time: after a fugue of Bach's, the slow movement from a sonata of Widor's.

To have departed from his usual plan because he happened to have discerned the probationer's presence, would, of course, have been absurd. And now, willingly enough, Bradbury-Wells—grey and tired, but still excited by his sermon—let her recognise that he saw her, and at the end of the Recital, in a then empty church, went up—a curious mixture of cordiality and reproach—to speak to her. He shook her hand at the door,

and said, as they passed out into the street together,

'Why did you come to hear me preach?'

'Really—really'——stammered Miss Sergison, with blanched cheeks. And she got no further with her answer. But his power over her was proved. 'It was a very good sermon,' she said, after a minute's silence, bringing up her forces. 'At least, the kind of thing that I like—that moves me. Yes, indeed, Mr. Bradbury-Wells, you hit it straight that time.'

'Did I? Well, I felt strongly. At bottom, you know, beneficed, and even unbeneficed, clergymen are remarkably like other people. Like other people,' he continued, yet more lightly, 'in entertaining something like a wish to be allowed—because you are alone—to walk towards home with you.'

'Home!' she exclaimed. 'But home is now the hospital. Five or six miles away, we must be from it . . . You will put me into an omnibus.'

If there was to be any casual talk between the Vicar, grey and dignified, and this slim young nurse, now was surely the time for it. There was no casual talk, however, but conversation more serious and direct.

'I may seem to have put a very rude question to you—about coming to hear me, I mean. I was at all events abrupt. I know I was. My dear Miss Sergison—Millicent, *si sic* (you know as much Latin as that); Millicent, I may say it, because thirty years divide us—you profoundly interest me.'

'Thank you. We do seem to have somehow hit it off,' she answered. She breathed freely, so delightful was it to have the privilege of frankness—and frankness with him in the evening street.

'You see,' he went on, 'you represent to me, in my far too numerous years, the charm of youth—freshness. "The morning's water-gold," Browning says.' That she liked that, and relished it, and thanked him for it, her face told him. 'And mere freshness,' he added, 'freshness in another, since freshness in one's self there cannot be, is an immense boon, an immense pick-me-up, to a soldier (I am still a soldier, please) who fights — has fought for all one generation — through sense of duty, more, I hope, than even through love of struggle. Thirty years, and perhaps to very little purpose. Very tired, at all events; but permitted neither by God nor man to drop out of the

ranks, this present noon-day march. So! You understand.'

'You've done hard work, and will still do it, Mr. Bradbury-Wells. Hundreds of people——before me—must have been glad to be a little help to you. Not that *I* could be!'

'Help or obstacle—that has often been the question, considered theoretically,' said the Vicar. 'Now *you* can tolerate my speaking in perfect plainness—the bottom of my thought, if I know it.'

'Yes,' she said.

'Well—I hold a commission. Every true man does. Clergyman as well as soldier, writer as well as clergyman. Now, suppose for a moment that it lies in my or this other man's power to retain about him some sympathetic presence, certainly delightful, probably absorbing—help or hindrance?—is not that bound to be the first and last question with him? Gravely put, remember!—even sternly. The commission that he holds—how is this exquisite presence going to affect its discharge?'

'Yes,' she said; 'I understand.'

'Such a matter is very personal. The presence I've described—your presence, it may be—this woman's or that—is, perhaps, to my neighbour

the grocer, my neighbour the doctor even, a mild and blameless pleasure, and to me, with my different temperament, my different career, a very Capua of disorganising joys. I say it not austerely. Liberty, licence even — all that Humanity thirsts after—they make their appeal. But for myself, Millicent, for thirty years I've denied myself such a presence. I hope I take Society as a cup of water, as a crust of bread, and march on. Just *de quoi manger*. I humbly *hope* I do, though I relish it. But sometimes—'

In a voice very tolerant and sympathetic, 'It must often have been a difficulty to you, all these thirty years.'

'Frankly, no. Only seldom. It may be, you know, that in regard to a human experience, thirty years are but a day. And then there comes a day, perhaps—a day which is thirty years.'

'Mr. Bradbury-Wells, I believe in you so deeply!' They were talking their real minds, at all events. 'In my own small fashion—at the Hospital, you know—I believe in work. At home—though I am not a bit of a Radical—I used often to feel that the girl I bought my gloves from was better than I; the girl who fitted my bodice, better than I, and far more

interesting. Perhaps even the girl who made my bed.'

'You are happy at the Children's Hospital,' he said, taking it for granted.

'At the Hospital,' answered the probationer, 'there is order and peace.'

'You obey laws,' said Mr Bradbury-Wells, cheerfully: 'other laws — thank heaven! — than the "futile decalogue of Mode." Not that I believe, with certain of my brethren, that the virtues are concentrated in the East-End of London. No, no; no, no! In all sorts of narrow corners, dark with ignoble rebellion—festering, if one may say so, with the last heresies social or religious—the most arrant nonsense is talked about the poor. The poor are not exemplary, nor even particularly deserving. Do you know, one day, I shall assert, in the pulpit, the claims of the rich—even the claims of the well-dressed. I myself like a well-made coat. I have one on at this moment, though it is too dark for you to see it. You will please to take my word for it. A frock-coat, quite well cut, Millicent—and yet, am God's creature.'

To call her by her Christian name seemed absolutely natural; to have called her by anything less friendly would have seemed forced and

stiff. And to walk with her at night, along the London streets, was, for the time, to be happy, and to deliver one's soul.

The Vicar and Miss Sergison had become one in thought—they were one in thought so curiously—he felt that although all definitions were suddenly legitimate, there were some that were not necessary. 'Talking about marriage,' he said, a minute or two afterwards—marriage being the one thing they had certainly *not* been 'talking about'—'to anyone with a career, especially a career that is a duty, marriage, with all that it entails, even under circumstances the most delightful, has often seemed to me a thing to shrink from. And now, my time has gone by.'

'Yes; if you think it has, it *has* certainly gone by.' But there was more of submissive acquiescence than of conviction in that assent.

'If the burden of marriage,' resumed the Vicar lightly, noticing her tone, 'could be expressed in hundredweights and pounds, avoirdupoids, it would seem, so I suppose, about the only burden under which Samson of old might justifiably have flinched.'

'It must be a very great tax on people, Mr. Bradbury-Wells.'

'And again, when a man who is almost elderly—and at bottom, entirely lonely—dreams, in some privileged day-dream, of union with exquisite youth, he forgets, I suppose, the temptations youth is subject to. Can he count on devotion? Can he count on fidelity?'

'Mr. Bradbury-Wells!' she said.

'I meant, in no vulgar manner. *That* you well understood. Though, indeed, we clergymen, like doctors, become possessed of murky secrets even on *that* matter. We know secrets about philanthropists. Occasionally we have reason to suspect that even a teetotaler is made of nothing more adamantine than flesh and blood. . . . But I meant, in thought and feeling, rather. I ought to be too experienced to judge people wholly by the accidents of conduct. There are, of course, young women—you are one of the young women—who would give a man more than he deserved, by your over-estimate of him, by your tenderness, perhaps, or mere beauty—I cannot make light of beauty. By your flexibility, your amenableness, your appreciation. Such appreciation *is* fidelity. . . . Still, there is a man's work. . . . My dear Millicent, I have walked you along the streets till you must be ready to drop. A wiry little girl, are you?

Nerve, at all events!' They had reached the starting-place of an East-end omnibus. 'I hope they will give you a very good supper when you reach "home." I had better come no further with you. Perhaps, in a few days' time, I may dare to write to you. *May* I dare to write to you? Yes, yes; it would be an affectation to put such a question formally.'

'It would be an affectation,' echoed the probationer, from the depths of her heart.

'Shine, shine in your hospital!' said the Vicar —her hand thrilling him—all the warmth of his eyes, the tones of his soul, blessing her.

IV

Still, the Vicar was soldier: soldier far more than priest. He had his orders to act upon—to simply obey—did he but once understand and thoroughly know them.

The Friday afternoon of that same week, he was deep in Dean Church's 'Gifts of Civilisation' —University sermons, St. Paul's lectures: a wonderful book; perhaps almost a great one—there was matter in that that bore upon next Sunday's preaching—when a letter was brought him; it had come by hand; it was unusual,

significantly so, instinct or quick perception told him—in the very form of it. That which friends had prophesied had actually happened. The Powers-that-be had recognised him. Bradbury-Wells was offered a Deanery.

But All Souls, Pimlico—after these long years' service in it? The work there? He put the letter by. He finished his sermon.

That night, after his solitary dinner, the thought struck him, he would go to Shadwell. As well to Shadwell as anywhere else, for exercise, thought, and decision. He would trace the way she had gone who had come to hear him. He would see the place where she was.

So he started.

At first, from Pimlico, he walked City-wards, and great St. Paul's, a dome in the eastern, became now, when he looked backwards, a dome in the western, sky. The Blackwall omnibus from the Exchange took him along Cornhill and Leadenhall Street. That was St. Katherine Cree—once he had preached there. Then Aldgate Church, standing back from the street; next, the stunted spire of Whitechapel. And then, from that district of the East-End which lies nearest to the City, from the old, the narrow, and the cramped, he got into the breadth

and modernness, into the freer movement and wider vista, of the Commercial Road. Here was the great Proof-House of the Gunmakers' Company; here the large draper's; the cheap tea-shop. Then the first East-End chimney—the shaft of Frost's Rope Works—and, just beyond it (he was walking now again) a turn down Harding Street, and southwards, under the railway bridge. Now, across the corner of Thirza Street, he was in the land of Mr. Zangwill, and of the poorer Jew. Across the corner of Cable Street—by that, three public-houses, 'The Two Mariners,' 'The Ship,' and 'The Lost Child.' And now, at a street's end, the first ship-masts rose into the sky. Then the great Shadwell Fire Station. But he was descending to the river; he was going too far. Back a moment!—this building to the left, opposite the Fire Station; a place of gables and of Gothic doorways—new, yet already grimy—this was the place.

In the greyness, as the Vicar looked around, the first lamps told orange or lemon-coloured against the thickened and obscure sky. It was summer-time in Shadwell. Outside, in the narrow street that sloped towards the Docks, confusion and raised voices, sailors half-drunk,

large, white-fleshed women, partially unclad—a hustling and obscene crowd. Inside, his instinct and experience alike assured him, order and peace and sacrifice. Sacrifice—peace. But she had gone there with no affectation of heroism. Simply, pluckily; ready for her labour.

The Vicar gazed, turned homewards, mounted again towards the Commercial Road. Those were the wards, then, where her warm hair shone; the place which her eyes lighted; the place where her footsteps fell.

Arrived at home once more, the Vicar went up straight to his study and lit the reading-lamp, and ate a couple of sandwiches that had been left out for him, as he had said he should be late. He sat down, took his pen in hand—his thoughts came flowingly.

He wrote two letters.

The first was in answer to the gracious communication that had been made on behalf of the Queen. He was an unambitious clergyman, a simple soldier to the last, content not only to carry, in his knapsack, the bâton of a marshal—content, besides, that it should stay there. Gratefully he declined the Deanery. He humbly considered it was his business for the present to remain at his own station.

The second letter was this one.

Every day, my dear Millicent, I have been thinking of you—of your consideration for me—of that which seems at times as the immeasurable boon you might, perhaps, in your pure womanliness, bestow on me, almost for the asking. But now I have almost done thinking of you; only, in the future, when I do think of you, I shall be thinking of the one woman whose name is in my heart. This I say plainly. In the relations of a man and a woman I have seen veils of silence drawn—fatal veils, too often. Whatever be your future, and whatever mine, you shall not be in the dark—neither of us shall be at all in the dark—as to my feeling towards you. You I love.

Partly on that account—because I love you—I shall never, unless it be by accident or at your own great wish, for some purpose that justifies it, I shall never, Millicent, see you again. If I say this, I know very well that I am, for the moment, old-fashioned. You will not blame me for that. I know that the last craze is to make Duty of no account: I know how 'modern' it is to spread the gospel of immediate indulgence: to preach, at theatrical matinées, the glad tidings of sanctioned selfishness. What a flippant rebellion! Wordsworth's 'stern daughter of the voice of God' voted an anachronism; the instincts of the animal alone exalted by the superficial and the shallow—yes, I shall add, the ill-bred—and we, put back to savagery, under the name of 'Progress.' If I received such doctrine, all my life would be false. No, I shall try to end as I tried to begin. Besides, the truth is there. The sense of Duty still nerves men to action, still keeps tender women humble and good.

He looked up from his writing. Except for one belated hansom, rattling into the Vicar's street from Piccadilly Circus, all was silent. Pimlico

rested. The Vicar's pen moved on the paper again. The final words—

So, in the completest sense—or at least in the most ordinary—I am not for you, and you are not for me. We part now, instead of hereafter. Nor, if you think of it deeply, is that so much as it seems. The promise of absolute union—is it, in love or in friendship, so often fulfilled? We part now. It may be that each of us is setting his feet, only a little the earlier, upon that way of loneliness which is the way of the soul.

Pale next morning—but, of course, quite punctually—the Vicar went about his usual tasks. People interviewed him. He visited the poor; and, when it was necessary, had the courage to chide them. Before going back into his study, for his severer work, he made the tour of his school-house, and in every class-room, somewhat abstractedly that day—gravely, yet courteously as ever—said his Good-mornings. From the rows of little figures, standing up as he entered—from all that little world he watched and was kind to, and which, of his own deeper life, knew absolutely nothing—came the unanimous answer, in many-voiced chorus.

'Good-morning, children!' said the Vicar.

'Good-morning, Sir!'

London: May, 1893.

JUSTICE WILKINSHAW'S
ATTENTIONS

JUSTICE WILKINSHAW'S ATTENTIONS

To tell the truth at once and state the facts plainly, Justice Wilkinshaw never administered the law in any High Court. He was not among the Queen's judges. His father, a big solicitor's managing clerk, being of ambitious temperament, called him, in a certain sense, to the Bench by the act of registering his Christian name. 'Justice,' whatever was the child's vocation, would, at all events, be impressive; and, in further extenuation of the choice, Master Wilkinshaw's father may fairly be supposed to have overlooked the contingency of his son's becoming the innocent cause of disappointment to the 'general,' or even the superior, reader. Justice Wilkinshaw's 'attentions' to any given young woman, it must honestly be allowed, cannot hope to have that interest for a thinking public which belongs of right to even the most

blameless amours of a highly-placed light of the law.

And yet the present historian has no choice but to chronicle one, at least — and perhaps it was the most important — of Mr. Wilkinshaw's love affairs. A good-looking child, a handsome boy, a dashing young man—he having (much against his will, for all I know) made havoc with suburban hearts, and aroused a cordial sympathy from damsels whom even the minor clergy had failed to touch—Justice Wilkinshaw, after some small business experience in a 'gentlemanly' City office, set out for the Colonies. The capital, his father agreed with him, offered scarcely room for enterprise. London was a restricted field. In the matter of space, at all events, the advantage rested with New South Wales. And the 'Colonies' proved kind. The lad himself, no doubt, must have deserved success. New South Wales sent him back, at three-and-thirty, with a friend and a fortune. The friend was a physician; the fortune was—well, it was reputed to amount to between sixty and seventy thousand, and Mr. Wilkinshaw declared, frankly and accurately, that not a farthing of it was invested in Colonial securities. How was it made? That, surely, is more Mr. Wilkinshaw's affair than

ours. That it was made honourably, no one could reasonably have doubted who beheld the young man, stout and muscular, grey-eyed, full-faced, and a little bald, with a mouth good-tempered, and a full and genial voice—there are men whose mere voices, upraised in greeting, constitute a benefaction. Just such a man did New South Wales send home to the old country when Mr. Justice Wilkinshaw—beaming, prosperous, and thirty-three—took ship with his friend, and when, at Tilbury, the P. and O. steamboat disembarked her passengers.

A visit, which would have been longer but for the presence of his friend, was promptly paid to Justice Wilkinshaw's father, near Salisbury, at the agreeable cottage to which the managing clerk had retired, with Dean Hole's 'Book about Roses,' and the opportunity of cultivating them on a soil they love. Justice Wilkinshaw afterwards, in the society of Dr. Robertson, spent some months in London, and late in the autumn —always with his friend—he repaired to Scarborough, which, as it happened, became the scene of those 'attentions' for which the interest of the reader has been besought.

It may here be mentioned, in parenthesis—what can, however, scarcely have been doubted

—that the claims of Dr. Andrew Robertson on Mr. Wilkinshaw were substantial. On Dr. Robertson there had grown an infirmity which, if considered as an offence, is venial in anybody, but doubly venial in a Scot. He was tipsy every evening. Later in the night, it is much to be apprehended that that tolerant word would have been inadequate to describe his condition. In plain English, he was often, at the midnight hour, discovered helplessly drunk. A harsher and less enlightened epoch than our own would have pronounced that condition a fault; but quite modern opinion, equipped with sounder knowledge, recognises in Dr. Robertson's disorder only a malady less immediately dangerous than peritonitis, though more persistent than ague. And Justice Wilkinshaw, with the promptings of affection to influence him, could not fail, as regards this matter, to agree with modern opinion. It is certain, at the same time, that he tried to do his best for a 'pal' whom he valued.

Nor is this to be wondered at. Dr. Andrew Robertson, formerly of Aberdeen, was a gifted man. At breakfast-time he was reflective and even admonitory. It was then that you would have turned to him for counsel. By lunch-time he was brilliant; and then it was that you realised

how much a man may be the gainer by having added a cosmopolitan experience to literary and scientific training. During the earlier stages of dinner, Dr. Robertson was but cheerful and urbane; only during the latter was his person in any way less attractive or his intellect perceptibly clouded. And from that hour forth, until the night watches, it might be held certain that Justice Wilkinshaw—who himself made no pretensions to brilliance, and had only good nature and sound sense—from that hour Justice Wilkinshaw watched with assiduity over the footsteps of his gifted friend.

Justice Wilkinshaw had probably hoped that the distractions and interests of London would have exercised a beneficial influence upon the amiable physician who 'indulged.' But that hope was not fulfilled, and the almost chronic indisposition of the Scotchman seemed to call for treatment in a bracing place upon the coast. Hence the removal to Scarborough, where Justice Wilkinshaw, choosing their quarters with exemplary care, settled down at one of the smaller hotels. The season was practically over. A few good Yorkshire families were staying in furnished houses for November, the men putting in an occasional appearance at the Club, near the

Cliff Bridge. But the inns were all but empty. The Eagle, which was selected by Justice Wilkinshaw as a temporary home, had hardly even passing visitors. It was kept by an elderly woman, portly and genial, with the large, welcoming manner invaluable to one who would exercise a hospitality not in the end unremunerated. In such an office, capacity by all means, but, above all things, 'presence.'

Mrs. Staplehurst had one daughter, thirty years younger than herself, and in some points 'up to date,' for though she had never heard of Schopenhauer, and might have been indisposed to consider Ibsen exhilarating, she had read something of Zola's in an inadequate translation, and in Art was so well informed as to hold that no picture could possibly attract you like a very large etching. She said, too, that people were 'sweet,' when all she meant was that they had been reasonably well-behaved, and she wrung your hand fashionably, as one who had no remembrance of the day when it was generally considered more convenient to shake it below shoulder-height. Not absolutely youthful, Miss Staplehurst powdered her face with discretion, and had dyed her mass of hair Roman-red, 'tawny,' like Horace's river, or almost like his

wine. Though Carrie Staplehurst was eight-or nine-and-twenty—if the harsh truth must out—several years might pass over her picturesque head before the desirability of being 'thirty' need be expected to present itself. She was a good creature, and disposed to be a merry one; nor, whatever may be the judgment of the severe and the juvenile—on this matter the terms are probably convertible—do I know that she was any the less womanly for betraying but little anxiety to have done, once for all, with the days and ways of her youth.

With her nine-and-twenty years, and deprived thus far of the attraction bestowed on women, in the opinion of young men of the period, by the married state, Carrie Staplehurst was possibly no longer fitted to be the heroine of any romance. Yet to her, as it happened, were Justice Wilkinshaw's attentions to be paid—to her, and not to Helen Barton, the young lady 'in the bar,' who wore the blue silk blouse, was dark-haired, handsome, soft-voiced and violet-eyed, and tall, and four-and-twenty: already widely experienced and of extended sympathies; affable, but self-respecting: the recipient of the earliest January buttonholes and of those Riviera roses that crowd out the flowers of the Spring. Yes, it was Carrie

Staplehurst—a little on the shelf by this time—and not the gracious, richly-moulded book-keeper, who inspired the loves of the Colonist, and blushed under the ardour of his manly admiration.

He began, of course, by ceremonious politeness—by a deference so respectful that it was actually American. When this had carried the outworks, he made further progress by the more English and very middle-class method of 'chaffing' the fair. Then, by an access of well-timed admiration and bluff but eloquent entreaty, the citadel was stormed. Carrie lay practically in the palm of his hand.

It had been pleasant at first to drive to Filey or to Heyburn Wyke upon a dog-cart; the Falernian-haired young woman seated comfortably by the Colonist, who handled the reins, while, in his sober morning hours, the Scottish physician swayed good-naturedly on the back seat. Then, as there was hardly a visitor in the house, and no one, certainly, of whose opinion or report there was need even for the most conventional to stand in awe, Miss Staplehurst would lunch hilariously in the coffee-room with Justice Wilkinshaw and the Doctor, while her mother and that young lady in the bar round whom the worshipping townsfolk justifi-

ably clustered in the evening hours, partook of early dinner laid behind a shelter of counter and indoors-window, between that and the rows of wine-glasses, the bottle of Chartreuse, the boxes of cigars, the hanging time-tables of the North-Eastern Railway, and the little vase that held the latest 'floral tribute' to Miss Barton's sympathetic charm.

At the more advanced stages of his friend's impulsive, but ever-jovial love-making, Dr. Andrew Robertson, formerly of Aberdeen, looked on with a creditable and kindly interest, yet likewise with a philosophy proper to one who had banished from his own life the disturbing emotions incidental to any serious pursuit of the attractive but elusive sex. He conversed genially —and drank spirits. Late in the day, the dilemma in which Justice Wilkinshaw habitually found himself would have won for him the sympathy of the austere; for, either he experienced a measure of uneasiness and remorse in the knowledge that his invalided friend lacked the support of his society, or else he was somewhat restless in the sense of unprosecuted loves, and in the obligation to watch over his friend until the hour of sleep should have declared itself, and the hotel staircase have been dangerously stumbled

up by the still garrulous and benevolent, but now wholly unintelligible physician.

So things went on, the two men staying continuously at the Eagle, and Carrie having become, not exactly the affianced bride, but, at least, the favourite comrade of the bold and agreeable Colonist. It was now an open secret that Dr. Andrew Robertson, notwithstanding his infirmity, proposed to minister to the sick. He had made many inquiries, and hesitated only on the point of whether he should purchase a practice or whether he should establish one. At one moment it seemed that an arrangement was all but concluded with a professional brother; at another, he was in treaty for a corner house in a terrace, and about to start on his own account.

Suddenly the servants of the hotel—hotel servants are profound analysts of behaviour, and can sometimes philosophise with the best, being, to do them justice, as free from prejudices of conventionality as a biologist of agnostic tendencies, or a young lady educated on Scandinavian drama—suddenly the servants of the hotel noticed a coolness, a discord, a rift within the lute. The somewhat strained relations between Mr. Wilkinshaw and Miss Carrie became the theme of conversation in the still-room, and

the occasion, I fear, of at least one significant wink bestowed by that exalted personage, the head-waiter, upon an appreciative housemaid, who asked for nothing better than to bask in the sunshine of his not too frequent smile.

'Marked attentions,' observed that philosophic waiter—in a corner of the staircase, somewhat oracularly—'marked attentions 'as been known to be dearly paid for.' And, with a dignified patronage, he kissed the young woman—mainly, no doubt, to emphasise the observation.

Dr. Andrew Robertson appeared at this moment to be grave and preoccupied. He vouchsafed no further information about his practice, and once—it was early in the evening, at an hour when he was yet master of his means, he transferred himself, in the company of his friend, to a neighbouring hostelry, where his potations were so far restrained as to permit him to come home merely cheerfully tipsy. Had the note of discord been struck only between the wealthy Colonist and Mrs. Staplehurst's child, the cause might have been assumed to exist in the freaks or the exactions of lovers. Perhaps, even now, Dr. Robertson's evidently grave concern with it was nothing but the solicitude of a friend. For a

day or two, at all events, his brow, like Justice Wilkinshaw's, was clouded. Mrs. Staplehurst, while stately and formal, had some air of anxiety, and no inconsiderable portion of Carrie's time was spent in the privacy of her bedroom.

Matters mended, however, almost as suddenly and as inexplicably as they had gone wrong; and cheerfulness and a sense of unity and domination being restored to their betters, the servants of the house waxed more serious, their souls absorbed, more thoroughly than of late, in their accustomed tasks. Hardly had the secret trouble been twenty-four hours righted, when Dr. Andrew Robertson announced to the waiter, at breakfast time, that he was summoned to York, and would go thither that afternoon, probably for a couple of days or so. The Colonist, of course, drove with him to the station; the friendliest of temporary *adieux* having passed between Dr. Robertson and his friend, Mrs. Staplehurst and her daughter, gathered in the vestibule of the hotel. Some hours earlier, a despatch-box—the property of the physician—had been deposited in the hotel safe, with formalities that might with advantage, perhaps, have been observed some weeks before. The physician took a receipt for the same, and solemnly handed

it into the keeping of his friend—his own infirmity made him, as an almost touching gesture seemed to indicate, but a sorry guardian of documents the careful retention of which was of any importance. So he departed, and that evening the opulent Colonist—his attention no longer divided between essentially incompatible pursuits—sat happily in Mrs. Staplehurst's parlour, and played a game of Halma with the young woman, whose eyes were bright that night, and her face flushed, under hair artificially tawny.

The next morning—while as yet Miss Carrie, who never rose early, was not visible except to the privileged of her own sex—Justice Wilkinshaw, putting on a great coat, for the weather had become chilly, and taking carefully his Congo cane, the companion of his meditations, sauntered out for his usual stroll—he had generally, of course, at that hour, the society of his friend. Justice Wilkinshaw did not, that Tuesday morning, return to lunch. By two o'clock his absence began to be remarked; but at three there came a more or less explanatory telegram, of which York, according to the jargon of the Post, was the 'office of origin'—

'Called away. Am writing. Guard Robertson's despatch-box.'

What had, indeed, occurred? It was useless to debate it. But, in the morning, Carrie, for once, was down betimes, and herself sorted the letters. What were they? 'Dr. Andrew Robertson'—from London. A bill, perhaps. 'Justice Wilkinshaw, Esq.'—the hand gave no clue to the nature of the matter within. 'Andrew Robertson, Esq., M.D.,' 'Miss Helen Barton,'—the young lady in the bar. Parcel Post: a box of perfumes—Rimmel's—'Miss Helen Barton,' in a masculine hand. Yes; that too-fortunate young woman, soft-voiced and tall, and richly moulded, with the bewitching eyes. Nothing for Carrie!

'Mater, not a line!' exclaimed Miss Staplehurst, meeting her mother on the staircase. 'By the second post!' she added, withdrawing to her room.

By the second post, however—which Mrs. Staplehurst herself was ready to receive—there was absolutely nothing for the hotel. The postman, with his important step upon the pavement, strode briskly and blithely, or, as it seemed to Carrie, almost heartlessly by. Mrs. Staplehurst's expression became unreservedly anxious, though she kept her thoughts to herself. But in a few minutes, knowing that there was no one in her private parlour, to it she repaired, and walked straight to the safe. Could anything whatever

be gleaned, it had occurred to her, by an examination of the outside of that despatch-box, which had been lodged so carefully, and was even now, to judge by the telegram, weighing deeply on Dr. Robertson's or Mr. Wilkinshaw's mind?

Her keys were in her pocket; she unlocked the safe, took out the despatch-box, which held, not only papers of much money value, but—as it now, by putting two and two together, seemed likely—certain written secrets, to boot.

Should it be opened? Should the lock be forced? She had not had time to decide the matter when she discovered that the despatch-box, although properly strapped, had not, on this occasion, been locked at all. Mrs. Staplehurst threw the strap aside, threw the lid open. The despatch-box, though light, was full.

On top there was a newspaper, the *Melbourne Argus;* next, another newspaper, the *Medical Journal;* again a newspaper, another *Melbourne Argus;* yet a fourth, very neatly folded, the *Melbourne Argus.*

Below it were several manuscripts, some two or three of them in envelopes. One of them she could not hesitate to open. It was but an unpaid hotel bill, a bill of her own house—made out as usual by Miss Barton with unfailing accuracy

—'No. 37 and No. 38. To the Eagle Hotel, Scarborough.' Now a loose paper. It was an earlier bill, bearing a stamped receipt: it had been paid promptly. Another loose paper: it was apparently the third unpaid account, 'No. 37 and No. 38' having become by this time 'Justice Wilkinshaw, Esq.,' the wealthy Colonist standing, doubtless, sponsor for his friend. Still another paper—an unpaid bill again—almost the latest of them, 'Justice Wilkinshaw, Esq. To Eagle Hotel, Scarborough.' And then the details, some of them a melancholy record of the illness of the physician—

Account rendered	£46	7	6
Hotel Stables	4	4	0
Board, rooms and attendance, three days, self and friend	3	13	6
Brandy and Soda	0	2	0
Sherry	0	6	0
Sherry	0	6	0
Whisky	0	2	0
Brandy and Soda	0	1	0
Cigars	0	8	0
Whisky	0	2	0
Sherry	0	6	0
Champagne	0	12	0
Cognac	0	4	0
Paid out	0	2	0
Total,	£56	16	0

An early settlement will oblige.

Mrs. Staplehurst was not a rich woman. Times were bad with the inn-keeper; but possibly a little money had been paid 'on account' in those last days of peace and restored amity? Nothing, she well knew. And the bills, all of them—stored for what conceivable purpose!—were disagreeable, even painful reminders of a debt as yet undischarged. But the more important documents? Money or money's worth must surely be amongst them. Below these bills, these envelopes, what were the things that demanded such exceptional care? Were they bonds, with coupons payable to bearer? Here was a parcel, tied carefully with string, and sealed. Mrs. Staplehurst broke the seal, perhaps thoughtlessly. Carrie would have advised her otherwise; but that unfortunate young woman, of whom energy and action were not marked characteristics, fretted lonely in her bed-room. Mrs. Staplehurst had surrendered the whole of her dignity; her face was hot with excitement. The contents of the sealed packet?

It was only a single broad sheet—another big newspaper, folded with deliberate precision. Instead of a bond, with coupon payable to bearer, it was again the *Melbourne Argus*.

Dr. Andrew Robertson, formerly of Aberdeen,

had conceived, for the twain, in the clear brilliance of his morning hours, that method of departure. The Colonist, who 'had nothing,' we may remember, in 'Colonial securities'—and nothing in securities not Colonial—the Colonist had but acquiesced. The scheme was the physician's. Yet Scotchmen, as we know, bear always the burden of over-much morality, and are deficient in a sense of humour.

Brighton: February, 1894.

THE FITTING OBSEQUIES

THE FITTING OBSEQUIES

Poor Mr. Salting! The much-respected, old-established watchmaker, in the side street, just off the local Regent Street—the 'Promenade,' they call it—at Brixton. He could be with us no longer. He had died three days ago. So much liked was he—so suave, obliging, skilful; always at his post, working in shirt-sleeves, with magnifying glass in eye; seen at all hours through the window, with its tray of wedding-rings and keepers, its little rose-and-green painted Louis Quinze clock (quite *dans le mouvement* as to the fashion, he was), and its confidence-inviting placard, 'Complicated Clocks and Watches carefully repaired: China neatly riveted'—so much approved and valued was he that all the neighbourhood regretted him. His widow was behaving admirably, as one would have expected. Katherine, his only daughter,

who—because discipline was acquired best of all from home, and because, with all extension in the sphere of women's activity, a watchmaker's business offered no field for a girl—was keeping (it was reported) the accounts at an Aërated Bread shop, somewhere in the remote West End, had been given, with great consideration, a day or two's respite from work. Their friends had gathered round them. One neighbour, in particular—Mr. Wilson, the retired draper—had been kind and concerned, to the verge, almost, of officiousness. But it was well meant.

Poor Joseph Salting! In regard to his funeral—chiefly through Mr. Wilson's initiative and brotherly energy—every arrangement was complete. Only one thing delayed the funeral's actual performance—the discovery of the body. But that must happen immediately. The corpse of the ill-fated tradesman might be recovered at any moment; what had at first seemed mysterious was now explained. He had disappeared suddenly, and there had naturally, at the beginning, been suspicion of foul play. Twelve hours ago the worst of all fears were set to rest, though very sad ones had found confirmation. To walk from his own homely dwelling to

Battersea Park, twice a week at least, and in all weathers of winter and of summer, had been the watchmaker's practice. But though it was known that he was there often—that Battersea Park was, during his scanty leisure, far more than anything at Kennington or Camberwell, his favourite pleasure-ground—the very familiarity of his family with the fact of his visits made them uncertain as to the days on which he paid them. Nor was he, probably, quite regular. In any case, on that wintry Sunday morning of his sudden disappearance there could be—when he started on his walk—no reason for anybody to be sure of his destination. But, on the Tuesday evening, came a light. An old lame beggar—against whom was no record—had taken to the police station a worn silk hat, which bore upon the inside of its crown 'Brixton Bon Marché,' and, neatly written in its brown leather lining, Mr. Salting's initials, 'J. S.' It had been found on the ornamental water.

The hat was recognised as his own, and in a certain measure the widow and Katherine drew breath; the widow, all that was to be respected in the lower middle-class housewife, and Katherine, the tall and dark-haired, white-browed daughter, sad and tired to-day, but generally with spirit,

energy, as well as beauty—a white rose of the suburban street.*

From the moment of the discovery of Mr. Salting's hat, Mr. Wilson, the retired draper, with his active mind and with his lately-acquired leisure, redoubled the evidence of his solicitude. Mrs. Salting was persuaded by him to place everything in his hands. He took, that very evening, to the office of the local newspaper, which was published next morning, a letter which would explain to the neighbours the precise situation, and indicate what course was to be followed. The lake at Battersea was at once to be dragged. Almost immediately, most probably during the very next day, word would be brought 'to the bereaved family'—feelingly wrote Mr. Wilson—'of the recovery of that which even in death remained precious.' The formality of the inquest would speedily be gone through, and it would then become the business of the suburb which had respected the deceased to give him reasonable funeral honours. Himself starting, out of sympathy with the mother and daughter, a subscription for the purpose—though they were not very poor, and though

* For the more personal history of Miss Katherine Salting, see 'Katherine in the Temple.'

they wished to be independent—Mr. Wilson was already in treaty for the space of a grave, and for its speedy preparation in the suburban cemetery. An undertaker, who had known his unfortunate neighbour well—who belonged, indeed, to the Liberal Club with him, and had regretted only a certain lukewarmness in more than one little effort to redeem humanity by a complete reversal of the existing order of things—had been led by Mr. Wilson to offer, *con amore*, to superintend the funeral. Mr. Wilson was in process of communicating with those male relations, as well as the local fellow-tradesmen, who would be the chief mourners. There was to be a hearse, of a certain middle-class dignity of aspect, and he wished to bear the cost of the presence of a fitting group of mutes himself. Wreaths—tributes so touching, since so unconventional—would not be forgotten. They must be carefully disposed. At each shop window a shutter was to be raised upon the morning of the melancholy day. Respect and sympathy were certain to be shown all over the quarter. Mr. Wilson was occupied with arrangements far into the night. He had a note-worthy talent for initiative and organisation, and never since it had been his joy to grapple with the requirements of a

'cutting' drapery trade had he been so much in his element.

On Wednesday morning the very heart of Brixton, the centre of its shop-keeping, was indeed—with the local paper in everybody's hands—sympathetically engaged on the question of Mr. Salting's death. Sudden, and in truth sad, but at all events accidental. Mr. Wilson led opinion on the matter, and amidst the immediate neighbours news was expected at every hour. What was the result of the dragging?

There was no news all that day. No body—no clue of any kind—had been found. The leaden-coloured lake had yielded up no secret; all that winter day, in Mr. Salting's favourite pleasure-ground, the bare trees, with their few bronzed leaves, kept their counsel. Mr. Wilson, hurrying about the south of London, from the undertaker's at Brixton to the ornamental water in Battersea Park, and from a brother of the deceased's at Kennington to a cousin's—a tallow-chandler, under the walls of Lambeth Palace—who resented interference with family matters as yet unsolved—Mr. Wilson, thus desperately engaged, acquired no tidings of value. Search and investigation on the Thursday were just as un-

availing. And now, arrayed in decent black—to be worn not for the first time at the funeral—the widow was obliged to be seen abroad, in consultation on domestic and business affairs. Katherine, who had sat long enough, indeed, to attest her sorrow and her respect, in a twelve-foot-square parlour, with its window-blind closely drawn, was restored to activity and the Aërated Bread shop. Again, in early morning and cosy lamp-lit evening—to and from the bustling place near Vere Street—her healthy trudges through the town. Common life must be resumed. And time passed. Even Mr. Wilson's preparations for the funeral had to lapse. The obsequies—after all, he asked himself—would they ever be carried out as he had planned? The hurried message summoning the more distantly placed relatives of the deceased—to be sent when there was news of the body—would it ever be conveyed? As for Brixton, the regrets of a neighbourhood, he was moved to recognise, though sincere, could scarcely be endless.

Weeks and months rolled by.

Meanwhile, Mr. Wilson himself had found other sources of interest. In the interval he had addressed the local newspaper, to much effect, on the newer burning questions; had

roused, for instance, the humane rate-payer on the subject of the indignity offered to inmates of the workhouse by expecting them for a moment to betray in their attire any token of connection with their sheltering and gratuitous home. The mind of the retired draper was ever on the alert; but his themes shifted.

One day he was the subject of a singular experience. The owner of some small house property in the north of London, Mr. Wilson was accustomed to repair to Kentish Town twice or thrice in the year, for conference with his agent. Exactly six months after the decease of Joseph Salting—it was a noble June morning, of sunshine and steady weather, when even the obscurer quarters of London appear gay—Mr. Wilson, after the interview with his agent, found himself in the Camden Town High Street, at the first stage of his homeward journey. He had crossed from the side of the Red Cap, over to the side of the Britannia. Suddenly, it flashed upon him that he recognised somebody; nor was the person whom he recognised unaccompanied. With an air of calm and assured possession, easily distinguishable from that momentary pleasure or careful courtesy with which even in crowded streets a man makes talk

to an acquaintance who is half a stranger, the middle-aged Brixton watchmaker—as favourable a specimen as you may wish to see of a respectable tradesman skilled at his craft—was walking in the society of a remarkably well-grown young woman, whose countenance, to do her justice, bore no sign of either care or guile.

Mr. Wilson grasped the situation — or as much of it as was necessary—and Mr. Salting, motioning his agreeable young friend to walk for a few moments in front of him, or to be occupied with the shops, stopped to accost the ex-draper. Joseph Salting was a well-spoken and pleasant-mannered man.

'I rely,' he said, 'on your discretion.' The other looked inquiringly. 'Though you and I had never any call to be particular friends, Mr. Wilson, between men there is a sort of free-masonry—ain't there? I suppose men understand each other. She is a highly well-conducted young woman, with too much head on her shoulders not to be able to keep a good situation when she's got one. She's an attendant in the stalls of the Hilarity Theatre—programmes; sees the Johnnies to their seats; between the acts, coffee, and Horton ices, and Fuller's sweets for the ladies—and she makes on an average twenty-

five shillings a week, independent of what I may call salary, which—I am talking very straight to you, remember—don't amount to anything considerable. I'm engaged myself as right-hand man at the first watchmaker's in Camden Town. Here in Park Street, handy. The change suits me first-rate. I've nothing to complain of. No; I can't find any fault. I and the young woman get along A 1. Some people emigrate; but I hold emigration's uncalled for. I changed my hat, down in Battersea Park, on the Sunday morning—slipped on a cap I had bought the night previous—came over from the Surrey side to these parts, and the thing was done.'

'Mrs. Salting?' began Mr. Wilson, by way of protest.

'Mrs. Salting? I had the feeling that I wished to make inquiry, and she bore up very creditable, it seems. And I expected it. Recollect, I brought nothing but a crown-piece away with me,' added Mr. Salting, with honest pride. 'I left Mrs. Salting provided for. And Katherine was out in the world already. She has to thank me and her mother for bringing her up respectable and satisfactory, and educated, too. This was a step I had been meditating for a considerable duration—though not with the

young person who has dropped behind. Nor with anybody, in particular. Remember, I and Mrs. Salting had lived together, winter and summer, close upon twenty years. Come to think of it, the upper classes has so much more variety. And Katherine is going in nineteen. I seemed to myself to have got deadly tired of Mrs. Salting and the Surrey side. 'Don't pass as Joseph Salting any longer, of course. Name of Withers. Well, I must be moving on.'

Having heard what Mr. Withers had been minded to tell him — the truth with great frankness — the retired draper, just in time, remembered his character, and implied to the watchmaker that he could not allow curiosity to get the better of principle. 'I do not wish to hear any more,' he protested. 'Oblige me! Not another word!' And Mr. Wilson walked away, with only a permissible and effective stage-exaggeration—the requirements of *l'optique du théâtre;* for even the social theatre has its *optique*, its conditions. He went upon his way, with, in voice and countenance, only a permissible exaggeration of sentiments he really held.

Back again in Brixton, the retired draper kept

his own counsel. He admitted, but to himself alone, that his first ardour of zeal on behalf of the deceased had hardly sufficient warrant. As for the watchmaker's story, Brixton remained in ignorance of the sequel, and was even forgetting the beginning. The negotiations for the grave-space in the cemetery had long been dropped, and it came, perhaps, to be understood, though not once was it directly stated, that the fitting obsequies were now unlikely to take place.

London: January, 1893.

KATHERINE IN THE TEMPLE

KATHERINE IN THE TEMPLE

It was the time when at the Aërated Bread shop, close by Vere Street, there was generally an hour with nothing to do. It was the one respite. The latest lunchers had finished their pressed beef, their 'milks-and-sodas,' their little beef-pies. These things and the sliced tongue had more or less vanished from table and counter, and the first tea-drinking had hardly begun. It was half-past three, probably. There was space and time for chats and for confidences. The young woman in the mahogany tank, who kept the accounts—Miss Katherine Salting, the tall, white, stately daughter of a man who until three years ago had been a watchmaker at Brixton—had taken some fancy to a rosy and refined young thing, rather above the average type of Aërated Bread girl. She had come lately. The young thing, who was

Miss Salting's junior by three years at the least, looked up to and admired Katherine without any reservation. Katherine, whose estimate of people—based, perhaps, on considerable experience—was quickly formed, had made up her mind about Edith with her usual decisiveness. She trusted her completely. The two sat close together on the velvet seat, under the notice, 'Fresh tea made for each customer,' and to the right hand of the mantelpiece, just by the locked money-box for the Depôt Providence Fund.

'Yes,' began Katherine, in a voice low as a whisper, but not at all as disturbing—quietly musical, indeed—'it seems I have lost everybody. There was Dad first; then Mother; then, two months ago, my friend.'

The other raised her eyes inquiringly, but dropped them, as withdrawing her claim to be told. She would receive only that which was offered freely. But it was Katherine's intention to tell her the whole.

'He had his chambers in the Temple—in Fountain Court. You were never in the Temple. Some name, besides his own was written up on the door. He was not a barrister himself, but was quite as much of a gentleman. What

was he? He was correspondent of a London newspaper; had been out to wars, and coronations, and manœuvres, and wrote about them; and it was very much talked of; and it always seemed to me, from his ways and what he said, he knew more of people in Vienna and Paris than ever he did in London. At home he lived rather lonely and quiet; was never really very strong, though you wouldn't have thought so, to see him. Not many people came to his chambers—his own people never—and, of course, I didn't know *them*. I never met them, except his brother, and he is a swell doctor; young; near this very street. Him I saw. Yes, I *had* to see *him*. He did me a good turn, when I needed it. You shall hear later. . . . You mustn't think there was anything wrong between us. He was not exactly my lover. And I was never engaged to him, you understand, though I don't know what it might have come to if—if—— It never did, however. And it was all *strictly private*. He was my friend—just that: I used to call him "my friend." . . . You know who I live with?' she continued, after a minute's pause. 'With an uncle at Kennington, since mother died. It's not the same as home, is it?'

The other made a gesture of assent, not

founded on experience. 'Probably not,' the gesture said.

'No, you don't feel you have the same business in that house, my dear. However, there I am! They behave well enough to me—but Mother was a dear soul! After Father was drowned —you remember I told you, the night before last, about Dad—Mother engaged a man, so that the shop might be kept going, and he didn't do so badly for her, but in six months, about, she was taken ill herself. I always thought Dad's death had something to do with it, for she was a very feeling woman, and they had scarcely ever had any words. Anyhow, Mother got ill. The A. B. C. gave me leave of absence. For thirteen weeks I nursed her. I was a chit before that—like you, though tall and big. But still a chit. I wasn't such a chit after those weeks—seeing her suffer so. That made a woman of me.'

'Did he know you at home—your friend?' asked Edith, stopping the click of her knitting-needles.

'I didn't know him myself till Mother was dead. And, of course, I had my own acquaintances, before and since. It isn't the cousins that come to your house and look you up at

Christmas and at Whitsuntide—is it?—that take you to the theatre, or the halls, either, or to dances, or Hastings on a Sunday? Trust them for that! My cousins have their own friends they take about with them. Everyone goes out, you bet! Well, I was telling you about him. Not his name, however. That's the one secret, though I do like you—the tortures of the Inquisition couldn't drag his name from me. But anything else! I was in his rooms the second night I ever saw him. Mad of me, wasn't it? Even you would know that. But no, it wasn't. I knew, directly I looked at him, that he was a gentleman. He showed me his books; he took me to the theatre; he told me about himself, his work, his people—everything. One day I'll bring his photograph to show you. He was not a young man—forty, or thereabouts. He used to tell me everything he had seen and read. Then, at night, between the Temple and Kennington, we had such walks! I used to call in upon him, on the way home, you know. We took such rounds: one night over one bridge, one night over another; now strolling, now in hansoms; then, best of all, on the top of the 'busses. He made me see London.'

'You were *always* in London!'

'It was he who made me see it. You never saw it. I never saw it till he showed it me. The little cafés, the newspaper offices, the different neighbourhoods, the churches even—nothing escaped him. Most of all he loved the River. We used to stand on Waterloo Bridge, Blackfriars Bridge, Westminster, according as the fit took us, looking at the sky, and the swelling water, with the lamps reflected, and the great shadows, and the barges, low and slow, trailing along, or motionless, and the dark warehouses and slaty sky, and all the pale gold lights, and one rose-coloured lamp flitting away—I see it now—on some tiny boat on that black water. I talk of it in his words. I feel I do. The halls and the theatres I've been to since. Cooped up all day, you expect—dances too. But I tell you I never knew what London was, till I saw it with my friend. The mere streets! I'm not speaking of anything besides; though, of course, there were the theatres. Since he died—I told you he was dead—I don't seem to have enjoyed even those places quite as much as I did with my friend—the decorations, the actors, the happiness of being there, crunched up together in the Circle,—and the music-hall with its gilding and velvet, and what he used to call, de-

scribing it, its "skirts and seltzers and smoke-dried air." Minnie Cunningham, now! . . . Sometimes, when I couldn't see him, he used to write letters to me. I wrote to him in return. And, of course, he had my photograph. And —I'm not exactly a duffer at Art needlework, you know—I made him an embroidered letter-rack, with an heraldic lion—you know the heraldic lion? He had it near the chimneypiece; my letters in it—in their envelopes. Near it there was my photograph, in evening dress, low at the neck, with a black velvet bodice, and I with long, bare arms. Yes, I was never banished, in one sense, from that study of his; I was "in possession," as they call it. It lasted three months. He must have liked me, I think, to see so much of me—but you can never tell. And the times we had together!'

'Did you like him?'

'Nincompoop! Rather! I came very near to loving him, I should suppose. But he was only my friend. And the times we had outside the chambers, too! Miles from Fountain Court; miles from London. Sundays, now and again—Chestnut Sunday. He never introduced me to anyone, except his brother. You remember the song, Edith, at the Tivoli?—but you haven't

been to the Tivoli—"You should never introduce your donah to a pal." And that's a true moral. And he acted up to it. Of course, I didn't stick to him alone, for all that. And now I wish I had. But there—I wasn't engaged to him, was I? And you can't wonder! Change is what one wants, after these figures and figures, day after day and hour by hour, till I sometimes think that all the world consists of tea for each customer, at threepence a cup, and scones and sultana cake, twopence. I went out, while I knew him, two or three times, with a solicitor. Would he have been angry, if he'd known? But he never did know! The morning after I had been out the third time with my solicitor, I had a note left for me at the counter, by my friend's brother. It was to tell me he was dead.'

'Dead!'

'Dead. Suddenly. I knew that he was ill—never well, I mean. What was the matter, I can't tell you—many things, and heart disease. I was torn in two.' She stopped a moment; then went on: 'Edith, I saw him lying dead. I felt I must see him. I made his brother take me there, that very day, before the relations came about. Besides, there was another reason; there were my things in his room. The photo-

graph here—it was stuck up on his bedroom wall; my Christian name written on it. This is his writing. Look! He wrote "Katherine."' She had taken from between the pages of a story of Miss Broughton's, in which it was wont to be embedded, the likeness of herself: a tall young woman, stately, in cheapish evening dress, but with a certain style—the dress made severely. One saw the long, bare arms, which, with Katherine's dark hair, must have been embrowned white—brownish at certain points—by daylight; there was the plain black velvet bodice, that flashing throat, the handsome face, with the large eyes; and the imitation diamonds. 'And the letter-rack — I seized it because it had been his,' Katherine continued. 'Above the heraldic lion, were my own letters. His brother let me take them. I *had* to, you know. Letters ending, "Your friend, Katherine," "Sincerely, Katherine," "My love to you, K. S."; on another, "Your faithful Katherine."' The young woman sighed. 'His people would have wondered who I was, I suppose. And, indeed, who *was* I? I was his friend. . . . I did want to go into fresh mourning for him, though I was in black for Mother already. But then I couldn't well afford to; and my people, too—at Kennington—

they would have wondered at me so, in deeper black. And I thought it didn't matter, as he wouldn't know it. If he *did* know it, then he *knew* I mourned for him. A week after, you'd not have recognised me—I'd got so thin. And I *am* thin still—feel my arms!'

London: March, 1893.

THE NEW 'MARIENBAD-ELEGY'

THE NEW 'MARIENBAD-ELEGY'*

Buxton,
16th July.

THE wedding is over. One has seen the last of what, outside the Chapel, was the real feature—the festoons in St. James's Street. My rooms had become insufferable—94 degrees. The town was exhausted prematurely. And even one who would have been glad, by this time, to have found the question of the Laureateship satisfactorily settled, could not wait in London because no settlement had been come to. It is indeed true that I have not been gazetted; and, worse, though it is allowed that I am not without qualifications, my chances are not of the best. The knowledge of this fact has aggravated my gouty symptoms, as much, I am certain, as a

* So I have wished to call it, with an allusion not too obscure; though the imaginative piece here offered to the reader consists of Extracts wrenched somehow from the locked and private Diary of an English poet.—F. W.

score of dinners, or three disappointments in love. Hence, I have arrived at Buxton. It is, I understand, less purely English than Homburg in these latter years. And as for our own fellow-countrymen, it is gone to, to some extent, by people from Manchester, whom it has never been in my way to know. The choice is, therefore, a wise one. Quiet, at all events! And early hours. I lay aside that Pontet Canet which my soul loves, and quaff, along with Buxton waters, one of those different vinegars that the Germans call Rhine Wines.

Let me, for a moment, go back to that question of the Laureateship; saying, of myself, only that my actual *dis*qualifications seem to me fewer than those of at least some of my brethren. I have made but few enemies. I have worked, not merely for money. I have lived, not only respectably—I have lived in the world. Nothing, I trust, pertains to me of the narrowness of a sect, while even more obnoxious to me than the bigotry of the Puritan, is the Agnostic's self-satisfied sterility. I respect Religion. In it, as in politics, I am essentially Conservative. Again, I have never been a sharer in the recent discovery that one's country's enemies are Humanity's friends. Nothing less than a real

patriotism can have been the source of that Ode of mine, and those two Sonnets, which attracted a good deal of attention. Of myself, no more. But I will jot down briefly, before taking the waters, just this about my brethren.

The probabilities, no doubt, are for Lewis Morris, and, though I have never been privileged to receive a thrill from anything he has written, he is able and ready. But Alfred Austin has done yeoman's service, and has certainly a range and brilliance foreign to the author of 'The Epic of Hades.' The gods of his idolatry are, it is true, sometimes divinities dethroned. Time has at all events exposed Byron, the firework poet of unsubstantial Liberty. Edwin Arnold wants neither freshness nor fluency, and in his appointment I should discern a recognition of our greatness as an Eastern Power—a recognition almost as effective as that which is conveyed by the presence of the Oriental in the suite of the Queen. From one of these three, the choice, I should suppose, must be made—unless, indeed, the election lights upon myself. Buchanan had strength, but his poetry has become occasional, and his polemics are uninviting. Besides——. Austin Dobson's achievements are complete within their given limits, but he has avoided

big themes. There is, of course, William Morris, to whom I am grateful for the charm of my sideboard and the peace of my dining-room wall. But has he really dropped the fad of Socialism for the fad of pretty printing? Our friend Swinburne's fires have not always burned discreetly. William Watson is a genius—a genius gifted too with 'Landorian terseness and dignity.' But I hear that he is terribly young. Six and thirty. If literary art were everything, Robert Bridges would have to be reckoned with. But, great as is his command of his particular instrument, and markedly as he possesses one of a poet's true passions—the passion for landscape and for Nature's life—it would be as unfitting to appoint him Poet Laureate as it would be to invite some master of the flute to roll out fugues of Bach on a cathedral organ. Bridges is an artist, assuredly; but the great breath of Patriotism blows nowhere across his page.

Perhaps the matter may be solved, for a while, by appointing (if not myself) the highest type of courtier we have known in our generation. Theodore Martin. Broad, refined, and sound. In sympathy with Goethe; tolerant of Catullus; and a friend of the Queen . . . I must go to the Pump Room.

17th July.

Buxton is not delivered over entirely to Ireland and Manchester. I have met someone I know. My dear old friend Lady Rose Rawson, sweet as ever, and now pale and silvery. In a Bath chair, in the Gardens. A good deal aged. I had forgotten that she married so late. Her one child—her daughter—walks beside her chair. A young woman of style and colour, decision and tenderness. It is likely that I may see more of them. The family estate in Lincolnshire—I mean, of course, her late husband's—is so impoverished by these bad times that Lady Rose refuses, as I hear, to touch the whole of her jointure. It would leave almost nothing to keep up the place with which she has so many associations. Her husband's nephew was the heir. He is young, and they are much attached to him. They are staying quietly in lodgings, in the Broad Walk, they say.

18th July.

The gardens are certainly beautiful; the morning band just tolerable; the evening band better—more strings. That *Largo* of Handel's they do excellently; and the *Ase's Tod* and *Anitras Tanz*—the *suite* of Grieg's. Lady Rose,

who is terribly lame, comes to listen. Her chair is wheeled into the Pavilion, as our charming old Lady Stanley of Alderley's is wheeled into Burlington House for the Private View of the Academy.

19th July.

I persuaded dear old Lady Rose and her daughter, to-day, to go with me to see a flower-piece that is at a local dealer's. A Fantin-Latour. Of his early time—'sixty-five. Zinnias—mulberry and peach colour, against slaty grey. Painted exquisitely. There are more facts in his picture—there is greater intricacy—than in those masterly impressions of Francis James's, in water colour, some of which I should rejoice to possess. More facts, but less freedom. Still—if I could put my hand upon the money. But I bought, the other day, before leaving town, a sketch of Thomas Collier's, and, as I am always obliged to have something pretty with me—a print, a drawing, a young woman, an engraved gem—it is here. Lady Rose wishes to see it.

Sylvia Rawson has led a very quiet life, and is, I think, none the less interesting because she does not happen to have gone through the

London Season, and has not frittered her soul in the search for 'pleasures.'

Judged by the vulgar standards of the Registrar-General, her age is six-and-twenty. But her tissues are three-and-twenty, and her heart twenty-one.

20th July.

Buxton, lying in a great hill country, is wonderful for the variety and movement of its skies. This afternoon I took my Thomas Collier to Lady Rose Rawson's lodgings in the Broad Walk. There was a sky effect at the moment. We watched it from the window, yet could still look at the water-colour. In force, suggestiveness, unity of impression, Nature, I pointed out to them, had not got much further than Collier's admirable Art. But they would not believe me. I see now, while I write, Sylvia's incredulous smile, as she turns a flushed head, illumined by the gold of the sunset.

21st July.

Sylvia Rawson—it is difficult to describe her, except by saying she would give warmth and dignity to any landscape you placed her in, She has almost everything—colour, expression,

and, though not absolute faultlessness, a singular distinction, of form. Tall, erect, supple; now walks with energy; now lounges largely, like an Albert Moore, warm and full. Her eyes, deep grey; her cheek brown and rose-colour, her hair brownish gold. Beauty, and the supreme beauty of health. The wind and the sunshine have done it, for the nature that was made for them!

22nd July.

A week before I came away from town, I took a print of Sebald Beham's to my friend, Cosmo Pauncefort. A Sunday. He was out. His daughters were at home. But I left the Beham at the door, and wrote to Pauncefort that evening, telling him about it, and that I felt too shy, too old, too dull to go upstairs to his daughters. I had a note from him, thanking me for the Beham, and adding, 'My children would have been glad to see you, if you had not been too "shy." "Age" and "dulness" they are accustomed to, in yours, ever truly, Cosmo Pauncefort.' He had me neatly. Yet what I said was absolutely true. There are days when I am much too hipped to come into contact with the charming.

23rd July.

She has such spirits! I am seeing much of her—and dear old Lady Rose.

Like many of the girls who make us proudest to belong to the race that produced them, she has never—or seldom—been abroad. Gentle blood, the English air, green fields, and an English hay-mow! Common duties, simple pleasures, and the great old traditions!

24th July.

In close companionship, whatever you may receive, you must always give out something, and it is nothing less, and nothing else, than your own nature that to some extent you impart. In near association, to be sullen is to be poisonous; to be courageous is to inspire courage; your contentment makes your comrade's hours seem to him, at the very least, endurable; and to be gay is to make glad.

25th July.

Elle est très femme—likes to be liked; rejoices modestly in her good looks, her freshness, and her vigour; holds by the old ways; believes in God and Man; looks out with reverence on the unsolved mystery of the great Beyond.

Would you have her different? How one compares her with that other type, the product of the lop-sided education of the middle class, and of the modern prosperity of cities—a type shallowly learned through theories and books, angular, bloodless, spectacled, unsexed; with fads and fancifulness in place of imagination—full of cheap negations and vulgar denials. One need not finish the outline. And back to *her* I come, to end with the phrase that I began with, because it is itself an eulogy. She is of her own sex—of her own sex entirely. *Elle est très femme.*

26th July.

She is a practical young woman. Goes about after breakfast with a pocket-book, amongst the tradespeople. To Dickenson's, the grocer's, choosing tea, and buys her vegetables and fruit at Oram's, Chantrey's, or that shop in Higher Buxton.

In the afternoon, I sometimes walk with her on the moors. My physician records an extraordinary abatement of my gouty symptoms.

27th July.

She has many interests, but one deep affection. I need hardly write it—her mother. Lady

Rose is frail and ailing. In cases like that, the thought is borne in upon one—and with many apprehensions—'Some day it must be over!'

A long talk with her this morning over wide ground—stories, experiences, art, literature, conduct. Conduct, perhaps, especially. Thoroughly tolerant and human. Puritanism never laid its grip upon her. Why indeed should it?—a Churchwoman. Towards the flesh the Church is more charitable. Of Nature's ways the Church has ever been the discreet and chastened associate, and not the tyrannous yet ineffectual foe.

28th July.

One's days in the Peak district give ample opportunity of studying the English rain-cloud, as it hangs, sometimes heavily, brooding, and motionless—formless, too, almost—over wood and pasture; or, urged by driving wind and half-dispelled by flying gleams of sunshine, hurries across the hillside its ever-shifting ramparts of grey and silver and stormy brown. The cloud of the hill country, now leaden and morose, dull and stagnant; now silently closing in the landscape; now lifting itself away; now, at the very moment of sharp illumination, clattering a

sudden downpour of its waters; now discharging itself with aimless, tiresome persistence, over many a league of valley and of upland, in thinnest, finest rainfall; now suspended, and, as it were, asleep; then quickened again and braced, gathered up, with its last word said; speeding on and away, from over grange and stone-walled farmland, from over ash-tree and hay-mow, from over homely hillside and topmost moorland, to some world not ours—into the limitless space beyond space of the remoter heavens.

29th July.

A little touch-and-go, is she? Her playing of Grieg not carried to a point that satisfies the exacting. Her out-door sketches having 'breadth,' perhaps, but denied the saving grace of 'values'—the absence of which makes even Holbein and Leonardo, even Dürer himself, count as nothing to the French-trained student of yesterday. Sylvia is certainly deficient. But at least, in a great man's phrase, 'she breathes the air through every one of her pores, and all her soul sees.'

30th July.

Again, quite suddenly, full summer. . . .

She wears a long thin frock, grey, with a touch of green in it, almost the colour of the mountain-ash leaves; and sticks red ash-tree berries into the ribands of her waist. . . . Charming!

31st July.

People, it seems, are arriving. The Sassoons are here; and this morning, at the barber's, there was enquiry for Baron de Worms. Someone had come with a message. Again, my admirable friend, the best of New York women-novelists—approved at Boston, admired in Washington, and known familiarly as the 'Siren of the Haarlem River,' since in New York she draws the world of fashion to that obscure neighbourhood—my admirable friend writes to me that she may take the waters here, after her London season. Her arrival is, perhaps, to be desired. A gentle alterative!

1st August.

To-day we read Wordsworth. Wordsworth was inspired scarcely less directly than Isaiah or St. Paul; and to us he is as valuable as they are, for his revelation was a later one.

2nd August.

In London—in the country also—I have seen

women misplaced. People are for their proper backgrounds; and Sylvia is as free as the wind and as expansive as the moors.

I asked, to-night, what was it gave this place its almost moral power to steady and renew—to put far from one the old worries, cares, ambitions, jealousies—to make one think of life more largely, more serenely. She said 'the greatness of the hills.' Yes. 'But the tone once got again,' she said, 'what but *one's self* is to enable one to keep it!'

Not to lie weakly at the mercy of the first miserable circumstance! To be a spirit 'poised and whole!'

3rd August.

Last night a great thunderstorm shook around the hills. Quite tropical in violence of noise and searching light. . . .

A headache to-day, she tells me. No one would have suspected it. I always thought the head was Venus's or Diana's. Is it human, after all?

4th August.

The 'Siren of the Haarlem River' goes to Vichy, it seems.

5th August.

She was at her best to-day. She had got hold of two little schoolboys—second cousins—and treated them to 'Pinafore': a morning performance. 'Sat with them in the gallery, the back of which the daylight picturesquely pierced through; was quite at one with them; got them tea and buns, and stuffed them with chocolates —Sylvia fanning herself all the time; her face aglow with heat and with pleasure.

But very early, as I was going to the waters, I met her pacing slowly the Broad Walk, near to their lodgings. No one there at that hour, and the world of hill and woodland and of ordered garden, lay out all new and silvery, in the calm and spacious morning. A little book was in her hand, and, as she paced, her mouth moved gravely. She was learning the Sixteenth Psalm.

6th August.

When I am with her, I feel more keenly than before the interest of this country, and praise the richness of its trees, the lush green of its pastures, the dignity of its encompassing hillsides, solid and bare against the travelling sky. But it is her beauty and her presence that in

truth I praise—of which in everything around I feel the charm—and moor and hillside, vitalised, exalted, by the magic of association, are yet but background for the play of that magnetic life upon her face.

7th August.

How many women are you? A child with children; guardian to your mother; a comrade to an old poet; and, to-day, quite happy with some very stupid people!

Better, at all events, than those exalted ones who, in vast morrows, lose the present. Instead of thinking only of the remote and the abstract, you retain 'the warm touch of the world that lies to hand.'

8th August.

What if, in little things—those little things in which custom binds us more closely than in great ones—one sometimes broke away from the traditions, went one's course, and saw the world a little differently? I walked with her this evening through Burbage, to the foot of the moor. At the proper hour we turned back, blameless and servile. It was before night. Dusk. But why? For me at least—for both

of us—just as we turned, what a lure lay in the crisp evening air, the great receding landscape vaguer and more vague, the deep night soon now to gather and to settle over the naked hills! What if one walked on instead, on and up, and, with one's hand upon her arm—she, so companionable, so sufficing—trudged, never tired, mile after mile, along the open tracts of wilder upland, through the great silence and darkness of the moors!

Certainly for hours one could have walked on happily, endowed with that completing presence.

9th August.

Their last days, I find—their last days!

10th August.

People begin to collect the First Editions of my books, do they? And Americans want my autograph. *À quoi bon?*—as far as I am concerned. I am in my latest period—the draggled end of a career.

11th August.

Burbage Churchyard. That must be my place, some day. Nowhere else. The hillside churchyard, opposite the pastures, the white farm, and the moorland. There passes over it.

in many seasons, and each at its appointed time, the sunshine, and the rain cloud, and the wind from the moors.

12th August.

No, I shall never say more. I shall never make things clear with her. Delightful: deeply friendly—but a barrier, somehow. A 'barrier'—my grief; and my consolation, yet 'friendly.'

13th August

This morning, at the station, watching her departure; with artificial face, a voice of pretended indifference, and remarks which are the stop-gaps of strangers. Yes, the Railway Station was the final mistake. Why do we ever go there, unless it is to get a newspaper, or to wish a good-bye, civilly, to the people who bore us? But, when our relations with people are a deep reality—is it not too incongruous!

And now, for a few days, until the place has seen its last of me, I walk about alone and pettishly; tetchy at the very sights, perhaps, which a week ago I thought so radiant. There was no way out of it. As a personal delight, she is all over. 'Visits!'—*à quoi bon?* Mere flashes of a charm denied. Never for me, any more, till

the end of the world, all that magnetism, all that sunshine!

Do I vainly suggest to myself that her 'beauty's metempsychosis' may yet have one more phase with which I am concerned—that in such an experience there is the material for many poems? Ridiculous and uncandid consolation! —even though Lewis Morris is not gazetted, it seems.

Before she left, there came to me, at last, her faultless secret. In truth, I half discovered it. Reflection; observation; a *nuit blanche;* and a word from Lady Rose, to help me out.

Was she ever on the track of love?—I had asked myself, often. Had she, in some byegone year, actually followed it? Or, from that particular path, looked at by womankind generally so curiously, had her gaze been wholly and for ever averted? Love, with its egotism and its perturbations, its contrarieties, its mad excitements, its divine self-sacrifice!

She has had her love, and it is over. She has been in deep waters. Judged even by the standards of men who know Life—the only fair standards, after all, though less acceptable, just now, than the standards of the garrulous theorist —he was quite unworthy of her. A blackguard,

indeed—half justifying, for once, some 'modern' lady-novelist's embittered but ill-informed page.

He left her, fortunately, while he was yet her lover, and it is good for all that he is gone. Need one say that she has felt it?—though she has exercised the self-control of a race that respects itself, and though the elasticity of youthful womanhood is happily hers—and a temperament that is a dower.

Where she goes I do not guess, in the years I may not see. But wherever she goes, there, for those who are with her,

> 'The daisies are rose-scented,
> And the rose itself has got
> Perfume which on earth is not.'

The spirit of contentment enfolds her like a garment—lies round her like the air.

14th August.

A marked 'recrudescence'—my physician calls it—of my gouty symptoms. The worthy man surprised, and a little baffled. No wonder! It was inconsiderate of me—I did not reveal to him the *mot de l'énigme.*

. . . . . .

Villa Villériaz, Geneva,
1st October.

Here, at Geneva, Balzac parted from that young Madame de Castries, to whom at Aix-les-Bains—and not at Aix alone—he was devoted. Just there, at Collonges, by the little church among the vineyards, lies our Browning's friend. . . . Sylvia! Sylvia! In my mind, for ever, you and the moorland are inexpressibly one.

Buxton: July, 1893—*Royat: July*, 1894.

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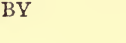

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